

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Families with Children Receiving Home and Community-Based Behavioral Health Services During COVID-19

*Updated as of March 30, 2020*

*On March 23<sup>rd</sup> Governor Baker announced that only essential businesses and services will remain open during the emergency. MassHealth wants you to know that all health care services, including physical/medical and behavioral health services, are essential services and will continue to be delivered to MassHealth members. MassHealth has given providers added flexibility so that they can continue supporting families in this challenging time. Many providers have moved their services to phone or video conferencing, also known as “telehealth.”*

*Below are questions families may have about continuing to receive home and community-based behavioral health services. Please keep checking back for FAQ updates.*

**My child and family receive services at home (for example: in home therapy, in home behavioral services, therapeutic mentoring, family partner). No one in my family is sick or shows any COVID-19 symptoms. Can my child’s provider still come to work with us at our home?**

MassHealth wants to keep all of its families and providers safe and healthy. We also want to make sure that families get their necessary services. MassHealth is working to give providers as much flexibility as possible to continue to deliver services throughout the COVID-19 state of emergency. Many providers have moved most of their services to phone or video conferencing, also known as “telehealth.” Some providers are still providing services in homes. Before a provider visits your home, the provider should be calling ahead to ensure that nobody in your home is sick or has a known exposure to someone with COVID-19.

**If our family’s provider cannot come into our home, can my child continue getting services by telephone?**

Yes, your provider can work with your family using “telehealth.” Telehealth allows health care providers, including therapists and counselors, to provide care to your child and family through telephone or video conference. If your child gets any of these services: In Home Therapy, Intensive Care Coordination (Wraparound), Family Support and Training (Family Partners), In Home Behavioral Services, Therapeutic Mentoring, Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), Early Intervention (EI) your child can still receive the services by telephone or video conferencing with these providers. You may also hear from your pediatrician or other outpatient care providers that they are doing most visits by phone or video conferencing.

**My child has an outpatient therapy appointment this week. Should I bring my child to the appointment?**

MassHealth suggests you call your child’s outpatient therapist first. Some providers may have appointments in the office and others may be using phone or video conferencing. MassHealth is giving all providers, including outpatient therapists, the flexibility they need to continue supporting children and families by providing services over the phone or video conference instead of in-person office visits. Before a scheduled in-person appointment, providers may call

you to make sure that nobody in your home is sick or has a known exposure to someone with COVID-19.

**My child gets Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) at home. Is the ABA provider going to come to my house? Is that safe?**

Some providers are continuing to provide services in homes; before visits, providers may call to ensure that nobody in your home is sick or has a known exposure to someone with COVID-19. MassHealth recommends that you call your ABA provider to check in about services. MassHealth is giving providers of all services, including ABA, the flexibility they need to continue meeting the needs of children and their families, including providing services over the of phone and video conference.

**My child's Therapeutic Mentor (TM) always sees him in-person. Will they be able to keep seeing each other?**

The Therapeutic Mentor agency and your family will need to decide together if it is safe for an in-person visit with your child. MassHealth is giving all providers, including outpatient therapists, the flexibility they need to continue supporting children and families by providing services over the phone or video conference instead of in-person office visits. Before a scheduled visit, the TM may call ahead to make sure that nobody in your home is sick or has a known exposure to someone with COVID-19. If it is safe to come to your house, TMs can be creative in finding ways to stay connected to your child. For example, they can take a "socially distant" walk, keeping at least 6-feet of distance between them. If you and the TM decide an in-person visit is not safe, your child and the TM can stay connected through phone and video calls.

**What happens if my child is in crisis? Can I still call my local crisis team for help?**

Yes, you can still call for a crisis evaluation. These are stressful times and we understand that children and families need access to crisis care. Please call your local crisis team before going to an Emergency Department. You can find a complete list of crisis teams [here](#). Your crisis team will ask a set of screening questions about COVID-19 to help determine where they will see your child. They may provide crisis services in-person or by phone or video. They may direct you to a community-based agency or to a local emergency department, if necessary. Again, please call your local provider.

**My child receives behavioral health therapy at school. Will the therapist still see my child?**

This will depend on the school district. In some schools, therapists are school district employees and in others, therapist may work for outside agencies and are not school districts employees. Each school district will have different ways of getting your child's needs met during this time. Please call your school district superintendent's office to find out details. If your child has an individual education plan (IEP), you should reach out to your school district's superintendent's office to learn how IEP services, including outpatient therapy, will be delivered during this time.

**I'm worried about my child's medication. Can I get a 90-day prescription?**

During this state of emergency, MassHealth is allowing pharmacies to fill 90-day supplies for many medications. In order to maintain social distancing and reduce contact with surfaces, pharmacies cannot ask for a signature when you pick up medications. Pharmacies are encouraged to provide curbside pickup or delivery through the mail. MassHealth will also allow early refills of existing prescriptions for medications if at least one refill remains on the prescription. Please call your pharmacy to see what your options are available to you.

**My services usually come once a week. Can they come more often during the state emergency?**

If you believe your child needs additional services, please call your child’s provider to discuss your concerns. MassHealth is giving all providers, including outpatient therapists, the flexibility they need to continue supporting children and families by providing services over the phone or video conference instead of in-person office visits. Many providers have moved their services to phone or video conference, also known as “telehealth.”

**With my kids out of school for so long, can providers see my child during the day?**

Please call your child’s provider to discuss available scheduling.

**With the move to phone and video, I’m worried I am going to run out of minutes or data. Are there resources to help with that?**

In response to COVID-19, most internet and cell phone service providers are providing customers with unlimited or additional minutes and data for the next 60 days. Service providers are not disconnecting service if customers cannot pay their bills and are waiving all late fees. Please check with your specific service provider for more details on their offerings. Many internet service providers are also providing free access to all WiFi hotspots for customers and non-customers. Additionally, all MassHealth Members are able to receive a monthly discount on wireless phone or home internet service through the national Lifeline program. You can find more details on the program and how to apply [here](#).